



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

February 16, 2022

*Dr. Kelli Vallieres, Chief Workforce Officer
Office of Workforce Strategy*

Proposed Adjustments to Fiscal Years 2022-2023 Budget

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kelli Vallieres, and I am the Chief Workforce Officer for the State of Connecticut. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you concerning Governor Lamont's proposed FY 2022-2023 budget adjustments for workforce development.

Our mission at the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) is to coordinate workforce development programs across Connecticut, to serve as the staff to the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), and to serve as the primary advisor to the Governor on workforce development policy. The success of our office hinges on our ability to successfully work across business, educational and workforce training providers, government agencies or partners, and community-based organizations to drive the development and implementation of strategic initiatives related to workforce development.

Notable Accomplishments To-Date

1. Supported the Governor's Workforce Council in developing a **statewide strategic plan** in partnership that outlines that overall workforce development charter in Connecticut. This plan includes 19 strategic initiatives that the Office of Workforce Strategy is responsible for executing and managing.
2. Launch **CT Back to Work**, which provided over 10,000 job seekers with free online certificate programming and instructional support to help upskill during the initial stretch of the pandemic.
3. Deployed over **\$10M in Coronavirus Relief Funds** over 2021 to the regional workforce development boards and non-profits that trained over 1,300 individuals in high-demand jobs. This program boasted over a 95% completion rate and data is still being gathered on placements but current estimates project almost 70% of people have found a job.
4. Recently launched application for programing grants for **CareerConneCT**, a \$70M program focused on providing short-term, industry-aligned, certificates to



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- individuals who are unemployed or underemployed. This program is estimated to train over 8,000 individuals in industries such as advanced manufacturing, IT, healthcare, and clean energy over the next four years. There are currently over 3,000 hiring commitments as part of this program. CareerConneCT jobseeker recruitment portal is expected to launch in April, training programs are expected to launch in May
5. Launched a **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee** that consists of over 50 community-based leaders across the state. This committee is broken out into five working groups, each focused on a distinct underrepresented population. The goals of each of these working groups are to develop strategies that promote equity and increase workforce participation among the impacted communities.
 6. Developed **eight regional sector partnerships** in Connecticut that consist of regional groups of employers who set collective goals and strategies to develop local talent pipelines in partnership with educators and community-based organizations.
 7. Partnering with our Department of Administrative Services to **develop a new statewide tool** that connects all the existing workforce technology systems under one umbrella program so users can more easily be connected to workforce services across the state.

General Fund Overview

AGENCY SUMMARY

Personnel Summary	FY 22 Estimated	FY 23 Appropriated	FY 23 Net Adjustments ¹	FY 23 Revised Recommended
# of FTEs	4	4	1	5
Financial Summary	FY 22/23 Authorized	FY 22 Adjustments	FY 23 Adjustments	FY 22/23 Proposed Total
TOTAL –	250,000	250,000	220,000	470,000

¹Note the proposed FY23 net adjustment includes \$100,000 for one additional durational staff who will focus on communications and legislative affairs.

The Governor's proposed FY 2022-2023 budget adjustments maintain and enhance funding levels for the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS). The proposed budget adjustments maintain the existing \$250,000 General Fund (GF) line item for OWS which is currently being used to partially cover staff costs for the four full-time employees of the team. In addition to the GF appropriation, \$500,000 from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Governor's Reserve Budget supports the office. The current four roles on the team consist of the **Chief Workforce Officer**, who works directly with the Governor and other senior leaders in the state to develop, coordinate,



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and expand the state's strategic workforce development plan, a **Chief of Staff**, who manages the day-to-day operations of the office and develops and coordinates strategic initiatives with core partners to implement the state plan, a **Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**, who is responsible for managing the Governor's Workforce Council's DEI committee and its five working groups, and a **Workforce Development Specialist**, who provides broad support across all functions of the team.

The proposed budget adjustments support two additional staff to the Office of Workforce Strategy. **One durational position, who will lead all Legislative and Communications activities**, a central role for any state agency, currently covered by the Chief of Staff. The new position will allow the Chief of Staff to refocus their efforts on managing operations and implementation of strategic initiatives.

In addition, a **Director of Regional Sector Partnerships and the Governor's Workforce Council is recommended in the Governor's Budget**. One of the core functions of the Office of Workforce Strategy is to serve as the staff to the Governor's Workforce Council, CT's federally mandated state workforce development board. With the passage of Public Act 21-2, June Special Session, the size of the Governor's Workforce Council was doubled to 51 council members. Before this act was passed the Workforce Development Specialist managed and coordinated the 24-member board but did not have capacity to engage council members in a meaningful way. This, in addition to OWS now being responsible for 27 additional members, necessitates adding a full-time staff member to manage the day-to-day operations of the GWC. In addition to this critical function, one of the signature initiatives outlined in the Governor's Workforce Council's strategic plan was the development of regional sector partnerships. These partnerships are regional consortia of employers who set specific objectives and goals for their related industry and geographic area. The ultimate goal of these partnerships is to develop an organic talent pipeline that addresses the critical workforce shortages and needs of regional employers. Over the past year, eight regional sector partnerships have been created in industries including advanced manufacturing, IT, and bioscience, with at least three more in development in healthcare. Coordination between these partnerships will ensure duplication across the partnerships is minimized and will ensure each partnership's objectives are aligned to the goals of the GWC and the administration.

Initiatives Funded from Carryforward

Provide Funding for Interim Staff Support Necessary for Implementing Federal Infrastructure Bill - \$100,000

The third proposed adjustment provides funding for a **durational staff to assist in developing and coordinating workforce development programs and initiatives related to successfully implementing the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)**. The IIJA seeks to improve nationwide infrastructure while also



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providing resources for clean water, broadband, internet and climate efforts, which all have a workforce development component. This position will be responsible for developing and supporting workforce training programs to ensure Connecticut has a shovel-ready workforce to execute strategic projects related to the IJJA.

Initiatives Funded from Federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds

Expand Workforce Programming Through CareerConneCT - \$15,000,000

Allocates \$15,000,000 in FY 2024 through the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The funding will expand upon the previously allocated \$70 million for the Governor's Workforce Initiatives, which is being utilized to support CareerConneCT to fund career programs for workers to train, upskill and reskill for in-demand careers.

This additional funding will build on the \$70,000,000 ARPA allocation previously approved which is estimated to train over 8,000 individuals, who upon completion, will gain essential employability skills and earn an industry recognized credential and ideally a full-time job. As of December 2021, Connecticut has an unemployment rate of 5.8%, equal to 105,000 individuals. Training 8,000 is a sizeable amount of the current unemployed population but more can be done, which is why the additional \$15,000,000 is critical. This additional investment is projected to train an additional 1,500 to 2,000 individuals.

The resources recommended in the Governor's proposed budget will provide OWS with the necessary funds to carry out our mission and to make important investments in developing a high-quality, industry-aligned, workforce that is immediately focused on getting people back work. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.